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Geographical Distribution

The Seri Indians live in two small Indian villages on the coast of the Gulf of California, State of Sonora, Desemboque and Punta Chueca. From there they frequently go to Isla Tiburón in the Gulf of California.

Approximately 35 Seri families live in Desemboque and 16 in Punta Chueca. Only in the first of these two places are there five "yori" (mestizo) families.

Sanitary Problems

The Seris have no defense against certain diseases which, like measles and flu, they acquire in their relations with the "yoris"; these diseases cause many deaths among the Indians. According to the ancient Seri Chico Romero, last Seri Governor, there was a great smallpox epidemic there about 1897 which caused the death of a third of the tribe which was living in Costa Rica, a small ranch on the coast of Sonora.

Seri Indian woman of Desemboque, Sonora. *Photo Henriette Yurchenco.*

In 1955 measles appeared among the Seris, with a great number of victims, children and adults; the actions of the rural teacher Leo Sandoval, the Linguistic Eduardo Mosser and of the sanitation authorities of Hermosillo, succeeded in keeping the mortality rate down; nevertheless, the number of deaths reached 5% of the total native population.

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In general, the Seris have a healthy appearance; the most frequent complaints are gastro-intestinal and visual defects due to avitaminosis. It is very possible that given the difficult living conditions resulting from the desert environment, a rigorous selective process among the newborn takes place so that only those who possess exceptional physical qualities survive. This explains why the majority of them retain the physical characteristics described by Hardy more than a century ago: "the Indians of Isla Tiburón are tall, healthy and well built".

In spite of attempts at education, the Seris do not practice the elemental rules of hygiene; their way of life, neglecting this aspect, contributes to increase the unhealthy foci which exist in the places where they have established themselves.

Dwellings.—The Seris retain many vestiges of their nomadic life, among them the hut which serves as their living quarters; many of them are simple provisional arrangements for sheltering themselves from wind and sun, and they bear no relationship to the stability and durability of our dwellings. The Seri hut was made to meet the necessities of a nomadic people who had no reason to spend much time nor work on making a dwelling which would only be used for a season (one, two or at the most three months). Nevertheless, some innovations have been introduced in the last 20 years, so that we must distinguish between two types of houses. The primitive model consists of a series of scrub pine arches interwoven with branches from the same shrub almost totally covered by foliage, tortoise shells, *zacate*, etc., with only a small hole in one of its ends as an entrance (this type of hut is the same that McGee saw in 1894 when the Seris still led a nomadic life).

In the new model more resistent woods are used, like *sahueso*, *torote*, etc., and poles, between which is laid a layer mud. The house is rectangular, without windows; with only one entrance, but always larger than the entrance to the brush hut. Other models would have to be added to these two, due to the incorporation and utilization of tents made in the United States which some U. S. tourists or the Society of Friends have given them. The tent is used as permanent living quarters; or sometimes combined with branches to cover the primitive type huts.

Domestic Animals.—The Seris are very fond of domestic animals like the dog, cat, and finally, the chicken. For all practical purposes these animals live together with the family; they rest on the piles of rags and sand which serve the Indians as beds; lick the plates and cooking utensils; dirty the house; increase the household fauna with their fleas and other vermin thus contributing to create and unhealthy atmosphere in the home.

Problems of Intoxication.—Their dealings with the fish buyers, in whose stores are sold beer, mezcal and tequila, has turned them to the consumption of these drinks. The Seri drinks liquor in an uncontrolled